York 2

THE

DIVINE CONDUCT AND GOODNESS,

As exemplified in

The LIFE of DAVID,

BRIEFLY

CONSIDERED AND IMPROVED.

Alſo

Life a Voyage,

A POEM.

BY T. WOOD.

The very hairs of your head are all numbered.---CHRIST.

WHITBY:

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II. Samuel. 7, 18.

Then went king David in, and ſat before the Lord, and he ſaid, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my houſe, that thou haſt brought me hitherto?

THESE words contain David's humble reflections on the Divine Goodneſs towards him, and his thankful acknowledgment of it. When he reflects on the gracious dealings of God with him, he ſeems to be at a loſs for words to expreſs his ſurprize. David having paſſed through a variety of ſcenes, ſome of them the moſt afflicted and calamitous that we can well imagine, was at laſt raiſed to the throne of Iſrael. And having ſubdued thoſe enemies, who diſputed his claim to the crown, and reſtored tranquillity to his kingdom, he ſoon began to form deſigns for the advancement of religion, which had been much neglected during the reign of his predeceſſor. We find this laudable purpoſe in part executed, by orders which he gave for bringing back the Ark, which had long been in a ſtate of obſcurity at Kirjath-jearim, and placing it in a tabernacle which he had provided for

it. But David imagined that he had not yet ſhown ſufficient regard to that venerable token of the Divine Preſence, and it touched his pious ſoul in the tendereſt manner, to think that the Ark of the Lord was lodged in a tabernacle or tent, while he himſelf dwelt in a magnificent palace. This immediately produced in him a reſolution to build an houſe for it, which reſolution he communicated to the prophet Nathan. *See now*, ſays he, *I dwell in an houſe of cedar, but the Ark of God dwelleth within curtains.* But we are told he was not allowed to build the Temple, though his intention of doing it was graciouſly accepted, and highly applauded. That noble work was reſerved for his ſon Solomon. However, this diſappointment was abundantly compenſated by a rich variety of precious promiſes, which the Prophet was ſent by God to communicate to David, relating to himſelf, and his deſcendants; particularly that the Divine Mercy ſhould not depart from him, nor from his ſeed, and that his houſe and kingdom ſhould be eſtabliſhed for ever in the promiſed Meſſiah, who ſhould ſpring from him according to the fleſh; hence he is called the Son of David.

After this, we do not find David murmuring at God as acting unkindly towards him, nor repining at the ſuperior honours to be conferred on his ſon, but he ſeriouſly reflects upon what God had already done for him, and would further do. And having received the meſſage from God, *he went in, and ſat before the Lord;* that is, as it is highly probable, he returned into the tabernacle or tent where the Ark

was, which was the emblem and token of God's preſence, and compoſed himſelf into a ſerious frame, gave himſelf to meditation, and ſpent ſome time in reviewing the paſt dealings of God towards him. And now ſuch an amazing ſcene of mercy opened to him, that he ſeemed almoſt overwhelmed with a ſenſe of the Divine Favours, and, at laſt, breaks out into this rapturous expreſſion, *Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my houſe, that thou haſt brought me hitherto.*

To improve upon theſe words, we ſhall, Firſt, conſider the thankful acknowledgment David makes of the Divine Conduct towards him: Secondly, the humble reflections he makes upon it: Thirdly, and then improve upon what ſhall have been ſaid.

I. We ſhall conſider the thankful acknowledgment David makes of the Divine Conduct towards him, in theſe words, *Thou haſt brought me hitherto.*

And firſt, when David ſays, *Thou haſt brought me hitherto*, he may refer to that indulgent care of Divine Providence, which he had experienced through the whole of his life. No doubt, David ſpent ſome part of that time, in which he *ſat before the Lord*, in revolving in his memory very diſtant years. He looked back, and repeated in his thoughts, the various ſteps his feet had taken in the pilgrimage of life, and could not but obſerve a kind Providence ſtill attending him through every ſtage, an indulgent hand opening and cloſing every ſcene of it.—It is as if he had ſaid, 'O Lord God, to thee I owe my exiſtence, and the continuance and comfort of

it. By thine all-wiſe and gracious appointment, was I placed ſo high in the ſcale of being, and by thy goodneſs have I been furniſhed with all thoſe excellent endowments, which diſtinguiſh the human ſpecies, from every other part of the viſible creation. Thou didſt preſide over the delicate and critical progreſs of my formation in the womb, which in continuance of time were faſhioned into a body, fearfully and wonderfully made, to be informed and animated by that rational ſoul, which thou haſt breathed into it. It was thy gentle hand that opened me a paſſage into life, for thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didſt cauſe me to hope when I was on my mother's breaſts.—Thou, O Lord God, didſt nouriſh and ſupport me in my feeble infancy, thou regardedſt my infant-cries, as if they had been ſo many fervent and intelligent prayers. Thy merciful hand reared up the delicate plant, and gradually unfolded the beauteous flowers of reaſon and underſtanding. Thou guidedſt all my youthful ſteps, and preſerved me from all that danger and ruin, into which the precipitate heat of youth might otherwiſe have hurried me. And thou, O Lord God, haſt been the guardian and ſupport of my riper years. Thy beneficent hand hath dealt out to me every needful ſupply. How rich and various, how conſtant and uninterrupted have the bounties of thy Providence toward me been! I was caſt upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly. The Lord is my ſhepherd, and therefore it is, that I have not wanted; he hath made me to lie down

in green paſtures, and led me beſides the ſtill waters. He hath prepared a table for me in the preſence of my enemies, anointed my head with oil, and made my cup to run over. In my difficulties thou haſt relieved me; many threatening dangers haſt thou warded off from me. And when I have been brought into circumſtances of extremity, thou haſt wrought ſurprizing deliverances for me. When at any time I was ſeized with dangerous diſtempers, and have by thoſe been brought even to the brink of the grave, it was only for the more glorious illuſtration of thy power and goodneſs, in bringing me back again: for thou didſt heal all my diſeaſes, redeem my life from deſtruction, deliver my ſoul from death, and crowned me with loving kindneſs and tender mercies.'

2. When David ſays, *Thou haſt brought me hitherto*, he might have a more particular view to that extraordinary interpoſition of Providence, by which he was raiſed from a low beginning, to the proſperous and ſplendid condition, in which he now appeared as king of Iſrael. David was the youngeſt ſon of Jeſſe, a man in no very plentiful circumſtances, as we may reaſonably conclude from that preſent, which he made to Saul, when he ſent his ſon David to court, which was only an aſs laden with bread, a bottle of wine, and a kid. Likewiſe, David himſelf was chiefly employed in the inferior office of keeping his father's ſheep; ſo that when Samuel came to anoint him to be king of Iſ-

rael, he was ſent for from tending his father's flocks:* this is what God himſelf reminds David of by the prophet Nathan. Now when we conſider David as the youngeſt ſon of ſo numerous a family, and under the humble character of a ſhepherd, it will appear he could not (humanly ſpeaking) have the leaſt proſpect of ſucceeding Saul on the throne of Iſrael; eſpecially as ſeveral children of Saul were now living, and Jonathan, the heir apparent to the crown, was deſervedly the darling of the people. But God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. For how mean ſoever David's circumſtances were, and how improper a perſon he might ſeem to thoſe around him, yet he was by God's appointment ſolemnly anointed to be king, and by a ſeries of ſurprizing providences was at length eſtabliſhed on the throne. Now when David came to review his former condition, and compare it with that dignity and ſplendor in which he now appeared, no wonder that he was filled with ſurprize and aſtoniſhment.† 'Who could have ima-

* One of the Trent Doctors, being a fiſherman's ſon born, while he was of ſome inferior order, would always have a Net ſpread under his table-cloth, when he was to ſit down at his meat, to put him in mind from whence he came, that ſo he might not be puffed up at any time with a high conceit of his own worth: but being ſaluted with a Red Hat from the Conclave, the Net was preſently laid aſide; and being aſked the reaſon, he replied, "I have now caught what I fiſhed for." Thus Religion is often made a ſtalking horſe to worldly policy: and when the Fiſh is caught, the Net is laid aſide.

† The contraſt between the ſentiments of Pope Adrian, and

gined,' might he ſay, 'that there ſhould ever have been ſuch an extraordinary change in my circumſtances? Who could have thought, that a poor ſhepherd ſhould ſo ſoon have commenced a mighty monarch, and that the care of a few ſheep in the wilderneſs, ſhould be ſucceeded by a wide empire over a numerous people, and the victorious conqueſt of the adjacent countries? How amazing that this hand, which ſo lately held a ſhepherd's crook, ſhould now be adorned with a royal ſceptre! that the graſſy bank, on which I uſed to ſit, watching my fleecy care, ſhould be changed to a ſhining throne! and inſtead of the ſlender proviſion of my narrow ſcrip, I ſhould now be ſurrounded with the plenty and variety of a royal table! Nor am I exalted to the throne to enjoy a tranſient ſplendor for a few days, and then for ever to quit all my power and dignity; no: God himſelf, that cannot lie, hath ſaid, that my kingdom ſhall be eſtabliſhed for ever, my deſcendants ſhall reign over Iſrael in a long ſucceſſion; and, which is a ſtill greater favour, the promiſed Meſſiah ſhall come of my family, of whoſe ſpiritual kingdom, it may be ſaid with the greateſt propriety, that it ſhall have *no end*. Surely ſuch promotion as this, cometh not

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King David, is great. It is related of the former, that having erected at great expenſe a noble colledge at Louvain, he cauſed to be written in letters of gold at the entrance into it, "Utrecht planted," there he was born, "Louvain watered," there he was educated, and "Cæſar gave the encreaſe," by his influence he was made a cardinal. One, to correct the vanity of the man, wrote underneath, "Here God did nothing."

from the eaſt, nor from the weſt, nor from the ſouth, but it is God the righteous Judge, that putteth down one, and ſetteth up another. It is thy gentleneſs, O Lord, hath made me thus great. It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in my eyes.'

3. When David makes this acknowledgment, *Thou haſt brought me hitherto*, he had, no doubt, an eye to that rich variety of ſpiritual bleſſings, with which he had been favoured. We have hitherto conſidered David as a man and as a king, recounting his obligations to the Divine Goodneſs. But we muſt not ſtop here: David was not only a man, but a good man; not only a king, but a ſaint, which by far is the moſt noble part of his character. He was *a man after God's own heart;* this was the teſtimony that God gave him, by his prophet Samuel; one who would conform himſelf to the intimations of the Divine Will in the affairs of government; the character primarily implies this:—but further; it implies that David was a perſon of a truly excellent inward diſpoſition, and regular outward conduct on the main. It is ſaid of him, that *he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aſide from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, ſave only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite*, which miſcarriages he deeply lamented, as is evident from the lively tranſcrips of his mind, which are given us in the pſalms he compoſed, and thoſe which we meet with in that narrative of his life, which the two Books of Samuel contain. He was one to whom God had afforded the peculiar mani-

feſtation of his grace and favour, and with whom he had entered into *an everlaſting covenant, well ordered in all things, and ſure.* Therefore it would be doing a great injuſtice to the character of this holy man, not to ſuppoſe, that upon this occaſion he thankfully and joyfully reviewed that, which above all things he elſewhere celebrated, even that which God had done for his ſoul. No: We cannot ſuppoſe his eyes ſo dazzled with the ſplendor of his crown, the grandeur and magnificence of his palace,* and his thoughts ſo taken up in ſurveying the ſurprizing change in his external ſtate, as intirely to overlook that ſtill more happy change, which God had wrought in his heart by his Holy Spirit. No doubt he now traced the gracious work in its origin and progreſs, reflected with tranſport on the rich experience he had had of communion with God, and obſerved with unſpeakable pleaſure, the various graces of faith, love, gratitude and zeal, exiſting and flouriſhing in his ſoul. From obſerving this happy change in himſelf, he would ſoon recollect its divine Author.

Thou Lord haſt brought me hitherto. 'Thou haſt effectually taught me to center my happineſs in thee alone, to conclude that in thy favour is life, and thy loving kindneſs better than life. It is ow-

* It was a wiſe ſaying of Charles V. to the Duke of Venice, who, when he had ſhewed him the glory of his princely palace, and earthly paradiſe, inſtead of admiring it, or him for it, only returned him this ſerious anſwer, "Theſe are the things which make us unwilling to die."

ing to that light thou haſt ſet up in my mind, to that happy bias thou haſt fixed on my will, and to that powerful turn which thou haſt given to my affections, that while many are ſaying, Who will ſhew us any good, my heart and tongue are taught to cry, Lord, lift upon me the light of thy countenance. Since I have taken the Lord for my portion, well may I add, I will bleſs the Lord who hath given me counſel, and I will adore that inceſſant care, with which thou haſt hitherto watched over thine own work. Thou, O Lord God, haſt forgiven all mine iniquities, as well as healed all my ſpiritual diſeaſes: when the ſenſe of guilt has renewed my pain, thou haſt made me to hear joy and gladneſs. Thou haſt given me that ſacred reliſh for communion with thyſelf, which has been my ſong in this houſe of my pilgrimage. Thou haſt taught me to delight myſelf in the Lord, and it is, becauſe thou haſt enlarged my heart, that I have run with ſo much cheerfulneſs and alacrity in the ways of thy commandments. Thou haſt opened mine eyes to behold wonderous things out of thy word, and this has engaged me to eſteem it more than my neceſſary food; more to be deſired than gold, yea than much fine gold, and has rendered it ſweeter to my taſte than honey from the honey-comb. Thy gracious preſence has made my attendance in the tabernacle, and at the altar, ſo delightful and profitable, that I prefer a day in thy courts to a thouſand elſewhere, and could chuſe rather to be a door-keeper in the houſe of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedneſs. Thus

much haſt thou done for me, and ten thouſand times more than I can rehearſe. And yet how much greater ſtill is that goodneſs, which thou haſt laid up for me: and as goodneſs and mercy ſhall follow me all the days of my life, ſo I ſhall dwell in the houſe of the Lord for ever, in his higher houſe, in Heaven, where they that dwell are ever praiſing thee, in a perfect, and uninterrupted manner. The ſprings whence I now draw much of my conſolation, will ere long be dried up, but in thy preſence there is fulneſs of joy, and at thy right hand are pleaſures for evermore, and where I hope to have my largeſt wiſhes fully gratified. I can now trace the draughts, the lineaments of the Divine Image upon my ſoul, yet it is my grief that they are ſo faint and imperfect, but hereafter I ſhall behold thy face in righteouſneſs, I ſhall be ſatisfied, when I awake with thy complete likeneſs. O Lord God, it is thou that haſt brought me hitherto. To thee I owe the ſaving knowledge I have had of divine things, and thou haſt raiſed this pleaſing hope with regard to futurity; nay, it is to the immediate influences of thy Spirit upon my heart, that I owe that holy flame of love, that ſacred delight and tranſport of mind, which I now feel, while I am proſtrating myſelf in thy preſence, and thus expreſſing the lively ſentiments of my grateful ſoul.*

* One cauſe, which impedes the reception of Religion, even among the well-diſpoſed, is, that garment of ſadneſs in which people delight to ſee her dreſſed; and that life of hard auſterity, and pining abſtinence, which they pretend ſhe enjoins her diſciples. And it were well if this were only the miſrepreſentation

Who am I? O Lord God! and what is my houſe, that thou haſt brought me hitherto?' Thus much we have ſaid, for opening the thankful acknowledgment, David here makes of the conduct and goodneſs of God towards him.

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of her declared enemies; but, unhappily, it is the too frequent miſconception of her injudicious friends. But ſuch an overcharged picture is not more unamiable than it is unlike: for I will venture to affirm, that Religion, with all her beautiful and becoming ſanctity, impoſes fewer ſacrifices, not only of rational, but of pleaſurable enjoyment, than the uncontrolled dominion of any one vice. Her ſervice is not only perfect ſafety, but perfect freedom. She is not ſo tyrannizing as paſſion, ſo exacting as the world, nor ſo deſpotic as faſhion. Let us try the caſe by a parallel, and examine it, not as affecting our virtue, but our pleaſure. Does Religion forbid the cheerful enjoyments of life, as rigorouſly as avarice forbids them? Does ſhe require ſuch ſacrifices of our eaſe as ambition? or ſuch renunciations of our quiet as pride? Does devotion MURDER SLEEP like diſſipation? Does ſhe deſtroy health like intemperance? Does ſhe annihilate fortune like gaming? Does ſhe imbitter life like diſcord, or abridge it like duelling? Does Religion impoſe more vigilance than ſuſpicion? or half as many mortifications as vanity? Vice has her martyrs: and the moſt auſtere and ſelf-denying aſcetic (who miſtakes the genius of Chriſtianity almoſt as much as her enemies) never tormented himſelf with ſuch cruel and cauſeleſs ſeverity as that with which envy lacerates her unhappy votaries. Worldly honour obliges us to be at the trouble of reſenting injuries; but Religion ſpares us that inconvenience by commanding us to forgive them; and by this injunction conſults our happineſs no leſs than our virtue; for the torment of conſtantly hating any one muſt be at leaſt equal to the ſin of it.----If this eſtimate be fairly made, then is the balance clearly on the ſide of Religion even in the article of pleaſure.

Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society. Sixth Edition. Pa. 90---94.

II. We now proceed to the ſecond thing propoſed, which was, to ſhew, what is implied in the humble reflections David makes upon the Divine Conduct and Goodneſs towards him. *Who am I? O Lord God! and what is my houſe?* He entertained low thoughts of himſelf and family, and ſpeaks of both in the language of dimunition. Though he was of the royal tribe, the tribe of Judah, and deſcended from the prince of that tribe, yet he diſclaims all pretence to merit on account of his family. Nor does he boaſt of his perſonal merit, or grow haughty and inſolent upon the diſtinguiſhed favours beſtowed upon him. No; he does as it were ſink into nothing, under a ſenſe of the goodneſs of God, and breathes forth this humble expreſſion, *Who am I? O Lord God! and what is my houſe?* Now, this humble language of David, may imply

1. A deep apprehenſion of the infinite diſtance there was between him and that God, who had thus diſtinguiſhed him by the bleſſings of his providence and grace. It is therefore, as if he had ſaid, 'O Lord God, when I raiſe my mind, and contemplate thoſe tranſcendent excellencies of thy nature, by which thou art infinitely exalted above all conception, bleſſing and praiſe, and reflect that it is by thee, that I have been brought *hitherto*, I am loſt in wonder and aſtoniſhment. It is a ſurprizing inſtance of thy condeſcenſion, that thou humbleſt thyſelf to behold the things that are done in Heaven! Wilt thou then in very deed dwell with men on earth? Wilt thou ſtoop to manage all the

concerns of a frail man? nay, one that is a worm, and no man? When I conſider the Heavens, the work of thy fingers, the ſun, moon, and ſtars, with which they are ſo magnificently adorned, and which thou doſt direct in their various revolutions, with ſuch exquiſite wiſdom, and amazing power, I have juſt reaſon to ſay, Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the ſon of man, that thou ſhouldſt viſit him? How great ſoever I may appear in the eyes of my fellow-creatures, how much ſoever careſſed and eſteemed by them, yet when compared with thee, how mean and deſpicable I am! How ſplendid ſoever my court, how bright ſoever my crown, yet all their luſtre grows dim, and diſappears, when compared with the glory of thy magnificent court above, and the uncreated beauty of thine immortal crown. Were I an innocent creature, though in a lower rank than that in which thou haſt placed me, conſidering thy known goodneſs, and the evidence I have that thy deſign in creation, was to confer happineſs on thy creatures, I might reaſonably expect thy kind interpoſition, ſo far as was neceſſary to anſwer that wiſe and gracious end, with regard to me, infinitely unequal, as I muſt confeſs myſelf to be. But, alas! when I conſider thee as a God of perfect purity and rectitude, the righteous Lord that loveſt righteouſneſs, beholding the upright with a propitious countenance, but neceſſarily hating all the workers of iniquity, and then reflect on my own depravity and guilt, how is my aſtoniſhment increaſed! for hadſt thou been ſtrict to mark iniquity, ſo aggravated an

offender, as I have ſometimes been, I could not have ſtood before thee, but inſtead of having had this experimental proof of thy gracious conduct, I muſt have been ſet up to eternity as a flaming monument of thy vindictive wrath. *Who then am I? O Lord God! and what is my houſe.*

2. As this expreſſion implies, his deep apprehenſion of the infinite diſtance there was between him and God, ſo it implies a ſenſe of his own meanneſs and unworthineſs, when compared with others of his fellow-men. David was now the greateſt man in the kingdom, but he does not thence conclude that he was the beſt man, though he was doubtleſs one of the moſt eminent ſaints that lived under the Old Teſtament diſpenſation. But as it is a conſiderable part of a good character to eſteem others better than themſelves, we reaſonably ſuppoſe that David was not deſtitute of it.* Therefore, when ſurveying the diſtinguiſhing favours of God

* The late Dr. Franklin ſaid to the late Dr. Mather, of Boſton, "It is more than ſixty years ſince I left Boſton; but I remember well both your father and grandfather, having heard them both in the pulpit, and ſeen them in their houſes. The laſt time I ſaw your father was in the beginning of 1724, when I viſited him after my firſt trip to Pennſylvania. He received me in his library; and on my taking leave, ſhewed me a ſhorter way out of the houſe, through a narrow paſſage, which was croſſed by a beam overhead. We were ſtill talking as I withdrew, he accompanying me behind, and I turning partly towards him, when he ſaid haſtily, "Stoop, ſtoop!" I did not underſtand 'till I felt my head hit againſt the beam. He was a man who never miſſed any occaſion of giving inſtruction; and upon this he ſaid to me: "You are young, and have the world

beſtowed upon him, he does not, like the haughty Phariſee, ſay, *Lord I thank thee, I am not as other men:* He does not look around upon the grandeur and magnificence of his circumſtances, and then add, 'Surely I muſt be a perſon of extraordinary merit, to be raiſed to this dignity, and put in poſſeſſion of this power:' No, his humble ſoul vents itſelf in quite a different manner. '*Who am I? O Lord God!* Why ſhould I be ſingled out from a whole nation, to have theſe peculiar honours heaped upon me? Are there not many far ſuperior to me in natural abilities? Many that have arrived at more eminent attainments in Religion, than I? Is it thus that thou requiteſt me, for all the inſtances of my ingratitude and rebellion? Is this the manner that thou dealeſt with a man who has been guilty of the baſeſt of crimes? Is it thus that thou dealeſt with ſuch a wretch, who far from deſerving to reign as thy vicegerent, deſerves not to live, and might much rather have expected thy curſe, than thoſe diſtinguiſhing bleſſings and promiſes, which thou haſt favoured me with? *Who am I? O Lord God! and what is my houſe.*' This now is the temper, that holy David expreſſes on a review of the Divine Conduct towards him. And was it not rea-

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before you: ſtoop as you go through it, and you will miſs many hard thumps." This advice, thus beat into my head, has frequently been of uſe to me; and I often think of it, when I ſee pride mortified, and misfortunes brought upon people by their carrying their heads too high."

Dr. Franklin's Works. Second Edition. Vol. II. Pages 10, 11.

ſonable? was it not delightful? We cannot but admire it in him. Let us then *go and do likewiſe.* Let us learn to think and ſpeak like him. This is a temper which we ought all to cultivate.

III. And this humble and happy temper is what we ſhall now, in the third place, make it our buſineſs to urge, by way of improvement of what has been ſaid. Though we are not perſons in the higheſt ſtations of life, as David was, yet cannot each of us recollect a rich variety of temporal mercies, that we have enjoyed and do ſtill enjoy? And cannot ſome of us (may we not hope not a few!) with pleaſure add, that we are, we hope, partakers of the *ſure mercies of David*, the peculiar bleſſings of the goſpel covenant? and that we are *bleſſed with ſpiritual bleſſings in heavenly things* in Chriſt?*

Let us then, in the firſt place learn, from David's example, diligently to obſerve and humbly to acknowledge, the hand of God in every providential diſpenſation towards us. Let us make a ſerious pauſe, and review our paſt life, and no doubt, if we do it with any degree of attention, we muſt confeſs that goodneſs and mercy have followed us

* In the original it is only HEAVENLIES. Our tranſlators have ſupplied Places, others ſupply Things. Spiritual bleſſings, as Divine Illumination, compunction for ſin, juſtification by faith in the merits of Chriſt, the adoption of children, ſanctification by the Spirit of God, and all the graces of the Chriſtian, are called Heavenlies, becauſe they come from Heaven, qualify men for Heaven, and are enjoyed in perfection in Heaven.

all our days. How many inſtances of providential goodneſs can we recollect! How many more have eſcaped our memory! And what beneficent hand is it that hath diſtributed thoſe bounties to us!— Why, it is God that hath *brought us hitherto*, from him *cometh every good and perfect gift;* from him the *Father of lights, with whom is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning.* His hand then is to be acknowledged in all. We ſurely abhor the notion of that ſet of philoſophers, who would baniſh God from this lower world, and not acknowledge that he concerned himſelf in the management of any human affairs, as abſurdly ſuppoſing it beneath his dignity and inconſiſtent with his happineſs. No, we know that he is the Supreme Governor of the univerſe, and that there is nothing done in this our world, without his immediate influence or permiſſion, for *his eyes run to and fro through the whole earth;* nothing eſcapes his notice, nothing is produced without his energy; even a ſparrow does not fall to the ground without our heavenly Father. Since all our concerns are under his management and diſpoſal, we ought not then, in this ſenſe, to live *without God in the world.* When we receive any mercy, let us not paſs it by with a brutiſh inſenſibility, nor aſcribe every inſtance of ſucceſs in our affairs to our own prudence and foreſight.— This would be to idolize our own wiſdom, in contempt of the great God, and, in the emphatical words of the Prophet, *to ſacrifice to our own net, and burn incenſe to our own drag.* Each of us ſhould rather erect a ſtone of remembrance, and call it *Ebenezer, hitherto the Lord hath helped us.*

— But let us further obſerve, that we ſhould be particularly careful to be affected with every extraordinary interpoſition of Providence in our favour. Probably ſome ſuch may be recollected by many of us, who are grown up to years of maturity. Cannot we look back and trace a ſeries of cauſes, operating in a moſt ſurprizing manner to produce ſome certain events concerning us? Perhaps ſome of us now appear in circumſtances, which but a few years ago we could not have formed any probable hope of: and it was ſo unlikely we ſhould ever arrive at them, that had we been told by any, that what we now find true in fact, ſhould certainly happen in a few years, we ſhould have looked upon the ſtrange prediction as the product of a fancy heated with enthuſiaſm, or ſhould have been ready to ſay to them, as the Shunamite did to the prophet Eliſha, *Nay but do not lie unto thine handmaid.* So that when we compare our former ſituation, with that in which we now are, and obſerve the various turns of Providence that conſpired to bring about the happy change, we muſt ſay with ſurprize, This is indeed *the finger of God!* Perhaps there are ſome, who, not long ſince thought almoſt as little of appearing in the agreeable circumſtances in which they now are, as David did of reigning over Iſrael while keeping his father's ſheep in the wilderneſs. Shall we not then with him acknowledge, *Thou, O Lord God, haſt done it?* And does it not become us to make the reflection with the ſame humble temper of mind? Have we not each of us reaſon to ſay, *Who am I? O Lord*

God! and what is my houſe, that thou haſt brought me hitherto?

2. From what has been ſaid we may alſo learn, to what we are to aſcribe it, if we be made partakers of the peculiar bleſſings of the goſpel-covenant eſtabliſhed in the blood of the Great Redeemer. We live after the exhibition of the Meſſiah, and under the Chriſtian diſpenſation. In this reſpect we are brought much farther than David was; further than all the eminent worthies of the Old Teſtament; for they only ſaw the happy day at a diſtance and rejoiced in it: But to us the Sun of Righteouſneſs is ariſen in all his ſplendor, in all his power. Surely, *the lines are fallen to us in pleaſant places, and we have a goodly heritage. Bleſſed are our eyes, for they ſee; and our ears, for they hear* what *kings* and *prophets* and many *righteous men* in antient times *deſired to ſee and hear*, but were not ſo favoured. But then, let us not be ſo tranſported with a ſenſe of our great privilege as to forget whence it is that we enjoy it—it is God that hath *brought us hitherto.* It is intirely owing to the free grace of God that a Saviour was ever provided; it is owing to his love that the glad tidings of ſalvation have reached our ears, and that the means of obtaining a ſhare in it are afforded us. But are there not ſome among us, to whom the Goſpel is come not *in word only, but alſo in power, and in the Holy Ghoſt*, whoſe eyes have been opened to *ſee the things that belong to their peace?* Who have been enabled to give the bleſſed Jeſus a cordial welcome into their ſouls, and to join themſelves to the Lord

in the bonds of an everlaſting covenant? We may anſwer in the affirmative, that there are many in this land at preſent who taſte a ſweetneſs in divine things, and reliſh the delights of communion with God in public and private, in his houſe and at his table; that find their reſolutions fixed for God and his ſervice, and are rejoicing in hope of future glory. Now was it always thus with ſuch? If not, to what are we to aſcribe the happy change? No doubt but ſuch characters are ready to ſay, *Thou, Lord, haſt brought me hitherto;* and, with the apoſtle Paul, *By the grace of God, I am what I am.* 'Almighty grace hath conquered the natural enmity of my heart againſt God, hath knocked off the fatal chains by which my ſoul was bound by ſatan and led captive at his will. Victorious love hath reſcued the deluded captive, and reſtored me to *the glorious liberty of the ſons of God.* O the ſurprizing grace of God! the glorious effect of unmerited love! And *who am I, O Lord God,* that I ſhould be the happy object of it? Why was not I left to work out mine own deſtruction? Why did thy bleſſed Spirit ſtrive ſo long with my perverſe heart, and not leave off the bleſſed work till he had bowed my will to the obedience of Chriſt? *Lord, how is it, that thou wilt manifeſt thyſelf to me, and not to the world?* Not unto me, O Lord God, not unto me, but unto thy rich unmerited grace be all the glory and praiſe.'

3. Hath God brought us all *hitherto?* Then how cheerfully may we commit ourſelves to the conduct of his Providence, and the influence of his grace

for the future. Our experience of the Divine Goodneſs, ſhould certainly be conſidered by us as a great encouragement ſtill to truſt in him. This is the wiſe improvement that David himſelf makes of his experience of God's goodneſs to him. *Becauſe thou haſt been my help; therefore in the ſhadow of thy wings will I rejoice.* And the apoſtle Paul uſes the ſame reaſoning—*God hath delivered, he does deliver, and I truſt he will ſtill deliver.* And ought not this thought to have its due weight with us, That God, who hath brought us hitherto, and dealt out all our former mercies to us, is the great Jehovah! *the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever.* His ear is not heavy that he cannot hear, nor his eye dim that he cannot now ſee, nor his hand ſhortened that he cannot help. He hath the ſame infinite wiſdom, almighty power, and unbounded goodneſs, to contrive and effect our happineſs that he formerly had; the ſame which he exerted in our favour in former times, and in favour of his people in far diſtant generations. On his indulgent Providence we may ſtill depend for all neceſſary ſupplies relating to this life; and from that inexhauſtible fulneſs, which is treaſured up in Chriſt, we may receive grace for grace. Let us then caſt all our care upon him, knowing that he careth for us. Let us go forth in his ſtrength to all the duties and trials of life. Let us be ſolicitous to paſs through the wilderneſs of this world, leaning upon Jeſus the beloved of our ſouls. We are bid to *be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, ſtrong in the grace that is in Chriſt:* thus may we hope to be carried

ſafely, and, upon the whole, comfortably through life; for, *through Chriſt ſtrengthening us*, we ſhall be able to *do all things* he requires of us to do, and to bear all the trials he may ſee fit to exerciſe us with. And though with regard to our outward circumſtances, we ſhould be enveloped in a cloud of temporal calamities, yet when we ſhall come to the end of it, and look back on the gloomy path in which we have trodden, and withal look forward into the heavenly world, into which death* will tranſmit us, we ſhall find reaſon to own that the Lord was in the dark cloud, and to ſay with admiration and joy, *Who are we? and what are our houſes, that the Lord God hath brought us hitherto?* But this leads me to add,

4. What abundant reaſon will the ſaints have for the recollection, when they arrive at the regions of glory and happineſs above! When God delivered the children of Iſrael from the cruel bondage and ſlavery of Egypt, by opening for them a paſſage through the Red (or weedy) Sea, through which they ſafely marched, when their enemies attempting to follow them were ſwallowed up by the waves, and ſunk like lead in the mighty waters.—With what agreeable ſurprize may we ſuppoſe them to look back on the watery path through which they had ſafely paſſed! No wonder that we find them raiſing a ſong of praiſe and triumph to their

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* Auſtin, when ſpeaking of Death, calls it "Oſtium Æternitatis," the Gate of Eternity, or the door out of this world into another.

Almighty Conductor, who had ſo miraculouſly brought them to the oppoſite ſhore. What tranſports of wonder, what floods of ſacred joy may we ſuppoſe will overflow the happy ſoul whom God, by a long train of merciful Providences, and the conſtant influences of his grace, hath ſafely landed in Heaven! How loud and cheerful will be his ſong of praiſe, when he reviews the ſeveral dangerous paths in which he has trodden! When he ſurveys the ſplendid ſcenes that then open upon him, and turns his raviſhed eyes around upon all the beauty and magnificence of the heavenly temple, upon all the delights and entertainments of the celeſtial ſtate, into what an ecſtacy of wonder and joy will he fall! and ſay, *What am I? O Lord God! and what is my houſe, that thou haſt brought me hitherto?*

Whence, O bleſſed God! am I brought? From what circumſtances of meanneſs and poverty, of danger and miſery, am I raiſed to thoſe of honour and renown? Once I was a child of wrath, for all by nature are ſo, alienated from the life of God, and at a dreadful diſtance from happineſs. Once I was walking in the paths of the deſtroyer, yea, running on with precipitance in a courſe of diſobedience to the Divine Will, trading, nay, as it were, dancing upon the brink of hell, and liable every moment to ſink into everlaſting torments: but divine grace checked my fatal career, ſhewed me my danger and approaching miſery, and with a gentle hand turned me into the paths of peace and holineſs. But alas! how ſlowly did I advance in

them! How wretchedly did I ſometimes wander and deviate from them! With what reluctance did I often engage in religious duties! In how cold and lifeleſs a manner did I perform them! What an uneaſy change of temper and diſpoſition did I experience! How fatally at times was my heart divided between God and the creature, while I lived in a world where the objects of ſenſe ſtruck me ſo powerfully! What a painful ſtruggle did I maintain with my inbred wickedneſs, or the depravity of my nature, while the fleſh luſted againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the fleſh! In what a conſtant and ſometimes a dubious conflict, was I engaged with my ſpiritual adverſaries, while paſſing through that *howling wilderneſs*, which is the precincts and range of the powers of darkneſs! How did I groan under theſe preſſures, and long for a releaſe! With what earneſtneſs did I breathe and pant after a better ſtate! —— And now, O Lord God, thou haſt crowned my utmoſt wiſhes, and brought me to that Heaven, where I ſo paſſionately wiſhed to be. But whither, O Lord, haſt thou brought me? To what ſecurity,—to what bleſſedneſs! A bare deliverance from thoſe things which were the ſource of ſo much trouble and uneaſineſs to me on earth, though no addition had been made to what I there enjoyed, had been an unſpeakable favour, and to have praiſed thee for it, would have furniſhed delightful work for endleſs ages: But how much more do I now enjoy! And is this the magnificent palace which thou haſt prepared for a degenerate ſon of apoſtate Adam? Is this the throne on which I am to ſit? Is this the crown, this crown of righ-

teouſneſs, life and glory, that is to be placed on my head? Are theſe the robes that are to adorn my worthleſs ſoul? Are theſe innumerable throngs of angels, and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, to be my delightful companions? Is the glorified Jeſus to be ſeen thus conſpicuous before me, the bleſſed object of my veneration and love? Nay, am I brought to ſee the face of God the Father himſelf; to exult in his immediate preſence; to contemplate with rapture his tranſcendent perfections; to enjoy his love, and to ſerve him without ceſſation, without wearineſs, and without imperfection? Yea, even *hitherto am I brought!*—Theſe are the honours to which I am advanced! theſe the pleaſures which I enjoy! and theſe honours are ſuch as ſhall have no end. Even when millions of ages are ſpent in thoſe noble enjoyments, millions of ages ſhall ſtill ſucceed, and my felicity be ſo far from an end, that I ſhall ſtill have an endleſs immortality before me. O happy ſtate! O glorious felicity! Is this the manner of men? O Lord God! ſurely no. The greateſt of mortals can confer no ſuch favours; no, it is thou, O Lord God, alone that can do it. To thee therefore do I bow with humble reverence and delightful ſurprize. The riches of thy free grace do I adore, and conſtantly, eternally will.—*Who am I? O Lord God! and what is my houſe, that thou haſt brought me hitherto?* That eternity on which I am now entered, ſhall be employed in thoſe grateful acknowledgments and ſervices, for which the longeſt period of time is infinitely too ſhort.

The Author compoſed the following lines laſt winter, ſoon after a great ſtorm at ſea, in which many lives were loſt. They appeared in a reſpectable Public Paper ſoon after, and are inſerted here, ſomewhat improved, with a view to their being rendered uſeful to the pious Chriſtian, eſpecially the Chriſtian Mariner, while on his voyage acroſs the tempeſtuous ſea of human life, to the haven of reſt and the company of the bleſſed in Heaven.

LIFE a VOYAGE.

TIME (parentheſis in eternity)
Ne'er ſtands ſtill---is conſtant in its progreſs,
Like the faithful trav'ller, or running ſtream.
The birth of nations, or the fall of kings,
The death of armies, or the voice of triumph,
Expiring thouſands by the rage of plague,
And yelling cries of famine loud and long,
Do not impede its flight, but on it goes.
Man, in his frail bark, is its greateſt charge;
He's launch'd upon the boiſt'rous ſea of life,
Expos'd to dangers, loſs and ſudden death,
And rides upon it till his veſſel fails;
Breaks in the tempeſt, 'gainſt the ſlinty rocks,
Or torn by warring elements and loſt,
Or worn by uſe till it can wear no more.
On Life's uncertain voyage all depends!
If manag'd well our gain can ne'er be told,
More precious far than all that India boaſts.
But oh! to fail---to ſteer wrong---ſpring a leak---
Suffer ſhipwreck---or periſh on the coaſt---
Eternity alone the loſs can tell!
To make the voyage ſafe and gain the port
In peace and triumph, reaſon never muſt
Sit alone at th' important helm. Faith,
Living Faith muſt act---lend her light and aid---
To bring the dear-bought cargo ſafe to land.
Revelation, infallible, divine,
Shews us the fair inheritance above:

By Faith we view it, ſee the heav'nly plains,
And long to ſhare in all its vaſt rewards:
The ſails of our affections being ſpread,
The Holy Spirit wafts us to the ſhore.
The happy mariner when, after ſtorms
And frightful dangers eſcapes ſafe to land,
Unloads his cargo, lays his veſſel by,
And ſees his family and friends again;
What joy! how great! reciprocal and loud!
On wings of love he flies to their embrace,
And ſoothes their ſorrow with his great ſucceſs,
Or keeps them gazing with his tale of woe.
So when the Chriſtian-mariner, bound
To Canaan's coaſt, eſpies the happy land
Where all his toils ſhall ceaſe, where friendſhip reigns
Without decay, and love ſhall never die---
With a ſpring-tide gets ſafe into the port,
And Faith is chang'd to ſight, and blooming Hope
Expires in fruition;---his joy is full.
Safe in the harbour of eternal reſt,
No more to venture on the dang'rous main.
The gates of glory, free for his approach
To his Redeeming God, are open'd wide.
The heav'nly ſplendor fills him with amaze
And new delight. The Godhead now appears
High on his throne, in majeſty and love,
And bids him welcome to the bright abode.
Angelic voices hail him to the ſkies,---
While kindred ſpirits rapturouſly join
Their new companion in the ſong of love.
Thus ſafe---thus bleſt, eternity ſhall ſpend,
And as it rolls, "It is enough!" exclaim.

....

"Looſe then from earth, the graſp of fond deſire,
"Weigh anchor, and ſome happier clime explore."

Finis.

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